

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The office action of December 16, 2004 has been carefully reviewed and these remarks are responsive thereto. Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 6, 7, 10, 11, 29, 30, 32, and 42-45. Applicants have amended various claims as to form by removing reference numerals from the claims. Applicants amend claim 33 to provide correct antecedent basis, thereby mooting the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Reconsideration and allowance of the instant application are respectfully requested in view of the following arguments.

Claims 1-5, 8, 9, 13-28, 31, 33-41, and 46-51 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Pekonen (U.S. Pat. Publ. No. 2003/0152107). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Pekonen has a filing date of February 14, 2002, whereas the filing date of the present application is March 2, 2002. Therefore, Applicants submit concurrently herewith a Declaration Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131 establishing invention of the subject matter of the rejected claims prior to the filing date of Pekonen.

With Pekonen having been removed as an applicable reference, all the rejections are respectfully traversed. Should the Office deem the attached Declaration insufficient, Applicants reserve the right to provide additional evidence and/or to provide arguments over Pekonen based on the merits of the reference.

All rejections having been addressed, Applicant respectfully submits that the instant application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully solicits prompt notification of the same. However, if for any reason the examiner believes the application is not in condition for

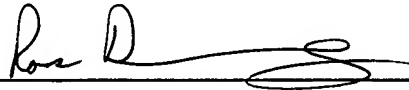
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Amendment dated January 11, 2005
Reply to Office Action of December 16, 2004

allowance or there are any questions, the examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at
(202) 824-3153.

Respectfully submitted,
BANNER & WITCOFF, LTD.

Dated this 11 day of January, 2005

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